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ABSTRACT

In this paper, boards of education are urged to evaluate their policies and their performance in relation to parent and citizen involvement and to consider seriously how programs at districtwide and school levels can be improved. The emphasis in such programs should be on developing open two-way communications and full participation aimed at maximizing the capabilities of the schools to know and act upon the wants and needs of their students and communities. Suggestions for Boards of Education include: (1) aid and support to parents and community volunteers who wish to share in the educational process; (2) steps to work effectively with any community group that indicates a willingness to support programs designed to improve education; (3) need to establish new groups or assign other responsibilities for existing groups to aid in developing policies, programs, plans, and budgets responsive to student and community needs; (4) acknowledgement of the contributions that students themselves can make to teaching, planning, and policy-making; and (5) establishment of an advisory council at each school level with defined decision-making authority in such selected areas as curriculum, budgeting, resource allocation, reporting and evaluation. (Author/SPT)

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ED145305

public involvement

an Occasional Paper from
Commissioner of Education Ewald B. Nyquist

AN EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIP AMONG PARENTS, STUDENTS, PROFESSIONALS, AND CITIZENS OF NEW YORK STATE SCHOOL DISTRICTS

The University of the State of New York
THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Albany, New York 12234

January 1977

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"The whole people must take upon themselves the education of the whole people."

JOHN ADAMS

"There is probably no such thing as citizen apathy regarding the schools. There is only lack of ways for them to participate in school affairs."

HERBERT M. HAMLIN

"You can't buy what a volunteer gives."

JAMES E. ALLEN

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INTRODUCTION

Democratic government depends upon effective expression of the public will. Realization of this objective, unfortunately, is not easily attained. But that should be more a spur to action than a deterrent. John Dewey, in *The Public and Its Problems*, articulated both the highest purposes of popular government and one of its knottier problems:

> **We have every reason to think that whatever changes may take place in existing democratic machinery, they will be of a sort to make the interest of the public a more supreme guide and criterion for governmental activity, and to enable the public to form and manifest its purposes still more authoritatively . . . The prime difficulty, as we have seen, is that of discovering the means by which a scattered, mobile and manifold public may so recognize itself as to define and express its interests.**

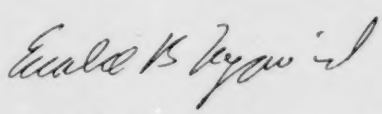
The concept of parents and citizens involved as partners assisting and supporting decision-making of a local board of education is as old as our State's history. Its roots are deeply embedded in the legal structure of education in New York State.

Involvement in school affairs should not be designed to get conformity and standardized acceptance from those who participate. Involvement should be designed to get help from all who feel they can help. This means that every board of education should take all reasonable steps to work effectively with every community group which indicates a concern for children and a willingness to support programs designed to improve their education.

Ours is an age of changing institutions, values, and beliefs. It is an age in which individual and social rights are being redefined. The need for revitalized, refined and more open communication among parents, students, education professionals, and other concerned citizens relative to school affairs is imperative. Members of these groups must be involved as partners in the pursuit of what is best for the education of each child. In doing so, all who are sincerely involved will make a major contribution to the improvement of schools through effective school-community relationships.

It is the purpose of this paper to encourage and stimulate broader involvement in programs that will enhance school efforts to meet current and emerging educational needs.

Several members of the State Education Department staff assisted me in the preparation of this paper, and I want to acknowledge, with particular appreciation, the fine contributions made by Joseph Amyot, Program Planner, Division of Elementary, Secondary and Continuing Education Planning Field Services.



Ewald B. Nyquist
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Participation in Historical Perspective

Parental and public involvement in education is among the oldest of American traditions. Historically, formal education was left to the smallest unit—the family. By the end of the 17th century, however, the common school was well established and proliferating in New England. Local communities were, without exception, responsible for the functioning of such schools. School matters were dealt with in the town meeting. In such a democratic atmosphere, parents, teachers, and other citizens made decisions about school management.

The governance and nature of the American public school did not change appreciably in character from its inception until the middle of the 19th century. However, between 1850 and 1950, far-reaching social and political changes occurred that resulted in the growing isolation of educational decision makers from much of the public. The situation was made evident in New York State in the 40-year period from 1910 to 1950 when more than 11,000 school districts were reorganized into less than 900. Simultaneously, student population in local districts increased nearly tenfold, while the total number of school board members decreased proportionately. As a result, communication lines between board members and parents were often badly strained.

At the same time, the education professional was taking on a new look. Preparation programs for the training of teachers and administrators focused more definitively on newly created areas of specialization. Minimum standards were created by state education departments for the certification of new categories of school professionals. A body of literature, often with its own jargon, was identified and used as evidence that education indeed was a developing profession comprised of trained experts in at least one speciality area. Consequently, upgrading of the profession led board members and laymen to show greater deference toward and dependence upon the professional educator and his/her expert opinion. Involvement in home-school-community affairs during this period unfortunately brought parents, citizens, and professionals together in programs, which in retrospect, often seemed to have been designed to gain acceptance of policies and opinions of school professionals and local boards rather than to promote mutual understanding.

There were, however, manifestations of unrest about the growing insularity of schools, professionals and boards during these years. For example, the National Congress of Parents and Teachers and the United Parents were two major organizations which tried to bridge the gap between schools and their publics. In addition, virtually every major college and university which trained educators conducted at least one course in the area of home-school-community relations by the 1950's. The National Society for the Study of Education devoted its 1954 Yearbook to the topic *Citizen Cooperation for Better Public Schools*. As recently as 1959, James Conant observed that:

> **Citizens in each city and town must get the facts about the local schools and then be prepared to go to work . . . The road to better schools will be paved by the collective action of the local citizenry in thousands of communities . . . The responsibility rests on every citizen in the land.**

Demands for parental involvement and citizen participation became louder and more persistent in the middle 1960's and early 1970's. They paralleled vociferous criticisms of U.S. foreign policy, the Vietnam War, the higher education community, and calls for support of causes as women's liberation, a clean environment, and black power. Unfortunately, demands of the period were sometimes voiced and repeated in terms and circumstances that on occasion served unnecessarily to disrupt or stall reasonable efforts of responsible citizens to collaborate in the identification and resolution of educational problems of the particular community. Too often, dissidents abused their right to dissent as they pressed for their cause through irrational argument and extra-legal activity. Too often, local officials were insensitive to legitimate concerns which citizens had about the operation of the schools. Too often, communities were splintered, local talents were squandered in misdirected efforts, people-power was dissipated, and worst of all some children continued to be denied the benefits of the kind of educational programs to which they were entitled.

Education-minded publics of the present are still to be satisfied. Efforts to involve them in decision-making must be made more effective. Students may sit as members of a board of education. In some districts they serve on advisory councils or student affairs groups. To the extent that they are capable and concerned, students should be involved. Parents of students should especially be involved. They should be anxious about reports of reading deficiencies, poor test results, lack of discipline, or unemployment of graduates. Not unlike any other citizens, they can be expected to want to know about such things as mounting taxes, "fads and frills," busing, alcohol and drugs, integration, community control, and student affairs.

It is important that these school constituencies be afforded opportunities to be heard effectively.

For nearly a decade, strong appeals for expanded public involvement have been made by the Board of

Regents and the Commissioner of Education. Similar appeals have been voiced by numerous educators, public officials, charitable foundations and writers across the nation. They express the concern that it is increasingly important for parents and other citizens to gain firsthand information about schools by participating fully and wisely in goal and policy development.

At the national level, Senator James L. Buckley of New York recently supported the cause of parent involvement with the following statement in the Congressional Record:

> **Just as the rearing of children is the right of parents, so too it must ultimately remain their responsibility. The freedom to make decisions affecting a child's learning carries with it the obligation to support those decisions with resources, with interest and with personal involvement.**

Federal guidelines for local administration of some compensatory education programs require that parent advisory committees be established for any district to be eligible for funds in support of the given program. Among programs requiring such parental involvement are ESEA Title I, Migrant Education, Indian Education Follow-Through, and Right-To-Read.

Goals of the Program

Basically, the goals of parent and citizen involvement should be:

- To provide parents and others with the opportunity to express their expectations in matters related to school affairs and create a forum for considering them;
- To provide participants with the opportunity to assist and support the board of education and professional staff as they carry out their responsibilities;
- To broaden the information base available to those ultimately responsible for educational decision-making within each school district;
- To enlist and strengthen cooperation of parents and others in support of educational affairs;
- To make greater use of community resources in order to provide children greater access to educational opportunity; and
- To develop an environment that encourages reasoned discourse between and among people from the community who hold representative points of view on education.

The Parent Advisory Council

Just as the State delegates educational responsibility to local boards, according to State law and regulations, school boards should consider establishment of policies for the delegation of authority essential to enhance decision-making in specified matters relative to the operation of a school building and the conduct of programs fashioned to carry out districtwide objectives and goals. To the extent that it is legal and practicable, each principal should be given explicit authority and resources to work among the school's staff, students and citizens in planning and implementing programs and practices designed to improve the learning environment at the individual school building level.

Nationally, the parent advisory council as a vehicle to provide greater parental involvement at the school building level is gaining considerable attention and wide acceptance. In some places, only the parents of children attending the neighborhood school may belong to the parent advisory council. Some councils, however, have opened their membership to students, professionals, and others in the neighborhood who want to participate. In Florida, for example, the parent advisory council for each school is mandated. No less than 1,500 parent advisory councils serve local schools there. City school districts in San Diego, Los Angeles, Detroit, Chicago, Milwaukee, and Lansing, as well as numerous other districts throughout the country, have either mandated or encouraged creation of advisory groups comprising people who live in the school attendance area.

In the City of Los Angeles more than 560 elementary and secondary schools are required to establish at least one school-neighborhood advisory council. As in the State of Florida, a major purpose of the council is to give the community a voice in making recommendations for each building's program. In a citywide evaluation of these councils completed in 1972, it was found among other things that:

- Council membership includes parents, students, staff, and other members of the community;
- Two-thirds of council members are women. The great majority of members are parents;
- Average membership of each council totals 16;
- More than 90 percent of the councils meet monthly;
- The support of the building principal is closely related to the success of the council;

- More than 80 percent of council members were elected from the school-community;

- Council members participate in such activities as assessment of needs, curriculum improvements, policy development related to interest and welfare of students, mobilization of public support for programs of educational concern, and identification of goals, objectives, and priorities.

The parent advisory council is no stranger to the schools of New York State. While, in some districts, individual building councils may have been established under other names, they still carry out functions similar to those carried out by building-oriented councils throughout the country.

For example, one Long Island district has at least one parent council operating in each of its eight buildings. Each building council operates and is organized according to its own needs. Membership is determined by members of the community and the principal. However, in most cases, only parents are selected to serve with the principal as council members.

In one large upstate suburban district, parents, staff and students serve in a variety of advisory capacities of a districtwide and building-oriented nature. One elementary school in that district has established four parent committees to involve neighborhood parents, other citizens, and school staff in educational, fund-raising, and social activities. A steering committee to coordinate work of these committees meets regularly to do business under the leadership of the building principal. In addition, neighborhood volunteer parents also work in that building to support the reading program in cooperation with the nationwide Parent-Teacher Association Project entitled Reading Improvement Services Everywhere (RISE).

A large upstate city school district has been working with the Mott Foundation to promote community participation. During the school year 1974–75, each building within the district had an organized school-community council to carry out long-range planning in the areas of curriculum, facilities, organization, and other topics of its choice. Each of these local community councils sent representatives to a districtwide steering committee to coordinate broad-based planning at the central level. The support which has been given to the community education movement in this city district indicates that involvement processes are accepted as part of its operating style.

Recent Trends

Nationally, parental and citizen participation in school affairs has increased rapidly. The form, style, and impact of participation vary widely.

- The State Legislature of California passed the California Early Childhood Act in 1972. The law requires that, to be eligible for program funds, districts shall involve parents in various facets of program planning and implementation;

- Some large districts, especially in cities, have provided for greater involvement through voluntary or mandated decentralization;

- Parent, student, and citizen committees have been established on the bases of function, building, clusters of buildings for an entire district, or a consortium of schools to study ideas related to new programs, greater accountability, equality of opportunity, and the use of technology;

- Community groups and neighborhood organizations have been established in large school districts to encourage community education programs and better serve the educational needs of a school neighborhood. The Flint, Michigan schools, working cooperatively with assistance from the Mott Foundation, have enjoyed a high degree of success in community involvement activities;

- Parents and interested citizens have worked for development of "open schools," "free schools," and "alternative schools" in order to provide them with greater opportunity to influence educational decisions affecting their children;

- A few citywide organizations have been created to devote major attention to school reform and to support increased citizen participation. The Citizens Committee for Better Education, Washington, D.C., is an example of such an organization;

- National foundations, such as the Mott Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the Kettering Foundation, have funded programs or studies concerned with parent and citizen involvement;

- Private consulting agencies, such as the Home-School Institute, Washington, D.C., work with school administrators, staff, and parents to give parents skills for teaching the "3R's" to support the work of the classroom teacher in the home;

- Numerous agencies, such as the National Committee for Citizens in Education, the National Urban League, the Urban Coalition, the National Education Association, the National School Boards Association, the American Association of School Administrators, the Educational Research Services, Inc., and, of course, the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, have been greatly concerned with the potential role of parents in educational governance;
- University-affiliated research groups, such as the Center for Study of Parent Involvement at Berkeley, California and the Institute for Responsive Education at Boston University, devote their attention almost exclusively to the study of parent and citizen involvement. The latter agency is currently doing a study on citizen participation in education for the National Institute for Education.

Yet, despite these continuing developments, arrangements and procedures for more effective public involvement in educational decision-making are much in need of refinement. Permanent mechanisms and improved techniques to bring the public, professionals, and board members to work better together need to be developed within each district.

Methods of Involvement

Informal involvement: Many of the programs related to public participation are quite informal. Parents and school staff share ideas at fairs, sports events, music and dramatic programs, or in the conduct of special projects of a civic group such as the Lions or the hospital auxiliary. Some programs involve parents and others with teachers as cooperators in science projects, literary and speech activities, nature study, historical programs, field visits, or fundraising and charitable endeavors. Informal involvement may occur as parents, students and teachers meet to exchange information. Occasionally, informal programs develop into permanent relationships which are formalized and given continuity. For example, in many schools today, volunteers, parents, and students work cooperatively as members of a formal "hall-monitoring" committee established to promote greater building security.

The volunteer program is often a somewhat informal one which grew as a grassroots development springing from a mutuality of interests on the part of participants. In some communities, for example, parents, students, and groups with similar interests have joined together informally as volunteers with considerable success to promote cultural activities throughout the schools and the total community in such areas as music, art, dance, and dramatics.

Formal involvement: Most formal programs, if not endorsed by the board, have been recognized by school officials. Some programs are conducted by groups with a very special interest, such as the Jaycees, the Lions, or the Band Parents. Some, as a "committee on educational excellence," involve people with no single common bond except interest in good school programs. Some groups are established according to room, such as "fourth grade room mothers," others according to building; others, such as a mathematics club, by program or purpose. In a great number of districts, the board works with districtwide standing committees. Some committees, however, are established on an *ad hoc* basis to work on an immediate problem. Recently, for example, some districts have established *ad hoc* groups to assist in the development of guidelines for equity for girls in athletics.

As early as 1897, 50 women from representative communities throughout the State met in Syracuse to create the Mother's Congress of the State of New York. During the next 80 years, that group increased its membership to nearly one-half million parents, teachers, and students and changed its name to the New York State Congress of Parents and Teachers. That group and many of its members have served as major forces in the support of efforts of boards of education and educators. Similarly, it was through the unselfish cooperation of laymen and educators that the school centralization movement of 1925–1960 was successful throughout New York State. Again, it was during the latter half of that period that local districts began widespread involvement of citizens as members of advisory committees serving in areas such as educational finance, curriculum, recreation, and adult education. Presently, citizen and student advisory committees may be found by the thousands among the State's schools. One cooperative board alone has 56 lay advisory committees. Each is specifically charged to assist in decision-making for the area of specialty. One New York City community district advisory committee works with the exceptionally talented in a program for disadvantaged gifted children. Membership on this group includes representatives of staff, students, parents, a local college, and a local private community agency interested in the education of gifted children.

Credit must go to the United Parents Association and the New York State Congress of Parents and Teachers for their work in maintaining traditions and implementing programs that have engaged parents, community and school into partnerships to serve the interest of children. Programs such as those described would not have been possible without the skill, pa-

tience, and devotion exemplified in the work of many members of those two groups.

New York State's schools involve members of the public for many purposes. Among these are the following:

- Parents are provided teacher-learner experiences in school similar to those provided to their children. It is then expected that those parents will be able to help the child at home;
- Parents may work in any number of ways to support the work of a teacher or administrator. In some cases, they assist directly in instructional activities. In others, they may do clerical work. A person interested in learning about parents as volunteers should see the 1974 State Education Department publication entitled *School Volunteers in New York State*. That publication cites a recent survey which found that more than 40 percent of the school districts of New York State were then operating volunteer programs;
- Parents, businessmen, professionals, and others with an area of specialization can be used in the teacher-learner process. Skill and knowledge from the community should be formally tapped by the school as a resource for the improvement of the program;
- Parents, professionals, and citizens have long worked together to assist the local board or work on a specific program of interest to the school neighborhood. In recent years, students have begun to make their contributions as equal participants. It is not uncommon in our schools today to find advisory committees on such matters as curriculum, finance, community relations, transportation, student affairs, special education, compensatory programs, adult education, health and drug education, and athletics.

General Principles Governing Parent and Citizen Participation

The concept of parents and citizens involved as partners assisting local boards is deeply embedded in the legal structure of New York State. Policies having statewide application are often set forth in laws enacted in the Legislature; others need clarification or amplification by the Board of Regents or the Commissioner of Education. When more specific policies are necessary for local district operations, the local board serves as the legally established agency responsible for their adoption and implementation. The people, through the Legislature and the Regents, have delegated to their legally selected representatives on the local board responsibility for final decisions on local educational matters. The responsibility of a board of education cannot be assumed by or delegated to any other group or individual. All citizens should clearly understand that policies related to local district affairs must be approved by the board of education.

An accessible system for communication between the board of education and the total community is clearly consistent with State law and our democratic tradition. It is, therefore, important that each board of education adopts a general resolution affirming that it supports and encourages cooperative work among parents, students, staff and other citizens. It is equally important that each board, with assistance from members of the community, establish general criteria and guidelines for involvement of those who would cooperate on its behalf.

The policy of the State Education Department is to encourage and to support efforts of any group of parents, students, professionals and other citizens responsibly at work on behalf of education in New York State. Nothing, herein, should be interpreted to mean that school boards and professionals should only formally interact, communicate and cooperate with individuals or groups having endorsement. The schools of New York State, individually and collectively, should attempt to use all the constructive assistance and criticism available. Involvement in school affairs must not be designed to get conformity and standardized acceptance from participants. Involvement must be designed to get help from those who feel they can help. Every board of education should seek out and take all reasonable steps to work effectively with any group in the community which indicates a concern for children and a willingness to support programs designed to improve their education. Independent parent, professional, student and/or other citizen groups are important to our democratic processes. They are to be encouraged and supported. Each board of education should develop guidelines and procedures to be followed in cooperating with independent groups. While the principles and guidelines described below will not always be applicable when a local board and independent group work together, they might be of use to both groups as they agree upon processes to be followed and objectives to be met.

Principles

While there is no pattern or blueprint that will fit all types of conditions in which people should be involved in the consideration of issues and resolutions of school problems, there are principles and criteria which are basic to all types of cooperation. Eight such principles are provided below. These principles are not necessarily all-inclusive, nor will they apply in all cir-

cumstances. They are intended to serve as a point of departure to stimulate thinking by those interested in promoting effective participation in improved educational decision-making.

1. Involvement Should be Open to All

Anyone who senses a problem, a need, or a concern related to local district operations should have access to a means to be heard.

2. Involvement in School Affairs Should Begin at the Earliest Possible Stage

Involvement in planning and operational affairs of a school or district should begin at the earliest possible stage of the process. To the extent that it is feasible, all who are to be directly involved in or affected by a decision should have occasion to be participants in deliberations. All steps from need identification through the determination of recommendations for action should be included. To that end, procedures that encourage the broadest possible degree of community involvement in cooperative work should be adopted. Moreover, arrangements for involving interested people should be simple.

3. Involvement Includes Identifying Educational Needs, Setting Priorities Among Them, and Developing Programs for Their Implementation

The local board of education should work within the community to provide leadership in the development of processes to identify and rank needs as well as develop programs to meet them. To do so, the board must provide direction, cooperation, advice, and help to all who support their planning efforts.

Board efforts at involvement should especially be concerned with identified priority problems in which there is considerable community interest; however, the board should be prepared to provide assistance and support to groups with more limited or temporary problems. Priority-setting is necessary, and preoccupation with communitywide issues generally should preclude attention being diverted from them to more parochial, or transient concerns. This must not be interpreted, however, to mean that school-community involvement should not serve as an instrumentality for the resolution of difficult problems and issues, regardless of their nature.

4. Involvement is Likely to be Most Beneficial When it Occurs at or Close to the Level in Which Educational Services are to be Provided

Efforts at influencing decision-making tend to be most effective when they are responsibly conducted by those who will be most directly affected by them. A board of education must carefully review problems and issues to be studied in order to determine the level at which they might be resolved. The Parent Advisory Council at the individual school building can be especially helpful to the board both in identifying and helping to solve problems of that school.

5. Involvement Should Be Carefully Planned and Implemented

Involvement is far from simple and requires serious planning. It is difficult and time-consuming. Nothing should be taken for granted in the planning and implementation of programs of involvement.

Most people are not particularly knowledgeable about many facets of school district affairs or comprehensive educational management. While the work of each committee must always be kept in focus, participants must be informed about the interrelatedness of the components of a school's operation. Efforts should be made to minimize the possibility that planning and implementation of solutions to problems interfere with daily activities. Through its planning committee and administrators, a board should know that problems and issues are validly identified, clearly stated and dealt with in priority order. Problems and issues should be considered within the context of the total school program. Reliable data should be collected, used, and catalogued for use as needed. The specialized skills of individuals who might participate in school-community programs should be identified. Available talent should be used.

Those involved should be kept clearly informed by the board of education relative to pertinent matters, but particularly those concerning roles, responsibilities, and expectations. The date for completion of committee work and the term of service of committee work should be agreed upon and clarified at the outset.

6. Involvement Processes and Outcomes Should Be Regularly and Systematically Evaluated

Parent, student, professional, and other citizen involvement, if it is to be effective, must be systematically evaluated. Planning should include a reliable evaluation component which will provide participants with clear evidence that a program:

- was designed to fulfill stated measurable objectives;
- did or did not accomplish what was intended;
- did result in certain other outcomes;
- did surface specific strengths and/or weaknesses which should be known;
- did provide new information calling for specific adjustments in the program.

Only through systematic evaluation can it be verified that processes, relationships, behaviors and/or objectives are satisfactorily moving an organization, program, or other educational efforts in the desired direction. Each board of education should implement an evaluation program by which both "formal" and "informal" involvement activities can be evaluated.

7. Involvement Will Lead to the Development of Recommendations Which Should Be Carefully Studied and Acted Upon by the Board of Education

Involvement should generate recommendations for improvement. Participants in such programs ought to know that their findings and proposals are fully considered by the board of education. The board of education should demonstrate that it considers all proposals on their merits. Proposals which are found to be educationally sound, prudent, and fiscally feasible should be adopted. Cooperative efforts carried out on behalf of a board of education should always be formally recognized. The timing and nature of such recognition will invariably differ according to circumstances.

8. Involvement Should be Carried Out Through Existing Organizational Arrangements

It is important that a board of education not establish committees that find themselves duplicating work or competing with others. Each board of education is urged to maintain a comprehensive record on its committees. Included in this record should be the charge to each committee and pertinent management information relative to membership, responsibilities, schedules, and related matters. Such a management system will enable the board to keep regularly informed on all formal group work being done under its auspices and assist it as it makes decisions for determining how other problems and issues might be addressed.

Some Guides for Carrying Out and Participating in a Program of Educational Involvement

The following basic guides have emerged over the years in school districts whose boards have established advisory committees. These guides should usually apply to each individual group and they should be made available to all participants at the time each committee is established.

1. Each group or committee should be organized according to the job accepted. It should designate its officers unless they are designated by the board.
2. Each group should adopt policies and practices that tend to maximize group stability and enhance development of desirable relationships.
3. To the extent possible, all interested individuals should have access and opportunity to participate in group deliberations. Regular committee meetings should be open and publicized.
4. Specific work plans and schedules in support of the total work plan of a group should be adopted in advance.
5. Assignments should be clear and realistic.
6. Meeting agendas and objectives should be prepared and circulated in advance.
7. Committee members should have access to pertinent information, data, and other research findings which will enhance their capability to serve effectively.
8. Minutes of each meeting should be recorded and filed.
9. All information and data collected by a committee are the property of the board.
10. The board of education should be regularly kept informed about the work of each committee.
11. Scheduled reports should be completed and filed in the form and format designated by the board. The board alone has authority to determine how reports are to be used or disseminated.
12. Only the board shall authorize individuals or groups to communicate on its behalf relative to matters under consideration or acted upon.
13. The board should avoid placing any unnecessary limits or restrictions on activities of its committees.
14. Committee meetings should be held regularly and as often as reasonable to complete work on schedule.
15. Committee reports and data should be the property of the board and should be freely available to the public.
16. A plan for dissemination of information on the work and findings of each committee should be adopted by the board and implemented.
17. Ordinarily, it is not expected that committee work should require appreciable financial support. Necessary expenses, however, such as those to pay consultants, travel, secretarial services, and supplies are usually borne by the board.

CONCLUSION

The involvement of parents as partners with school officials in the education of their children is a fundamental part of our democratic tradition. The same is true of the involvement of all citizens in the planning and decision-making of their local school boards. The roots of such involvement are deeply embedded in the legal structure and custom in New York State. Yet many school districts are not making as full an effort as they might to continue and expand these fine traditions.

In this paper, boards of education are urged to evaluate their policies and their performance in relation to parent and citizen involvement and to consider seriously how programs at districtwide and school levels can be improved. The emphasis in such programs should be on developing open two-way communications and full participation aimed at maximizing the capabilities of the schools to know and act upon the wants and needs of their students and communities.

In this connection, it is suggested that boards of education should:

- Aid and support parents and community volunteers who wish to share in the educational process.
- Take all possible steps to work effectively with any community group that indicates a concern for children and a willingness to support programs designed to improve their education.
- Consider whether the board needs to establish new groups or assign other responsibilities for existing groups to aid it in developing policies, programs, plans, and budgets responsive to student and community needs.
- Take full advantage of the contributions that students themselves can make to teaching, planning, and policy-making.
- Build, where possible, on established and successful existing groups such as PTA's.
- Strengthen ways to report on the effectiveness and responsiveness of students and professional performance.
- Work to shape the bargaining process to include arrangements and procedures to involve the public in the bargaining process through a variety of open and publicized meetings.
- Provide for the establishment of an advisory council at each school level with defined decision-making authority in such selected areas as curriculum, budgeting, resource allocation, reporting and evaluation.

Perhaps more than ever before, the local school board, the primary unit responsible for educational policy-making in each school district, should be seeking all reasonable avenues for meaningful involvement among its various publics. It has been shown here that, with appropriate safeguards, local boards can more effectively fulfill some of the policy-making responsibilities through significant participation of students, staff and citizens. The individual school is seen here as a reasonable and manageable unit by which board policy under the leadership of the principal may be more creatively, prudently and productively implemented.

The State Education Department will provide assistance on request to schools which seek help in the planning and management of such programs. It welcomes information about existing and emerging programs in order that it may make known throughout the State information about successful ones.

In educating its children, New York State needs the ideas, the time, and the talents of all interested parents and citizens.